

WHO/WHERE WE ARE

Lakewood, CO: Pam Sponholtz, Project Leader; JoAnn Wise, Budget Admin

Buckley Air Force Base, Aurora, CO: Krystal Phillips, Wildlife Biologist, Dustin Casady, Fish and Wildlife Biologist

Peterson, Schriever, Cheyenne Mtn Air Force Bases, Colorado Springs, CO: Max Canestorp, Wildlife Biologist

US Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs, CO: Brian Mhlbachler, Biological Scientist; Melissa Whittingslow, Wildlife Biologist; Joe Murphy, Forester

Rocky Mountain National Park, Estes Park, CO: Chris Kennedy, Fish Biologist

Warren Air Force Base, Cheyenne, WY: Alex Schubert, Fish and Wildlife Biologist

McConnell Air Force Base, Wichita, KS: Laura Mendenhall, Fish and Wildlife Biologist

Pueblo Chemical Depot, Pueblo, CO: Clark Jones, Wildlife Biologist

Gunnison, CO: Cole Brittain, Aquatic Biotechnician

Colorado Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office



JANUARY 2017

Habitat Conservation & Management

Tree and Slash Removal. Cheyenne Mountain AFS experienced severe winds in mid-January (peak wind speeds clocked at 101 mph). As a result, several trees were blown down, some across the boundary fence. Considerable time has been spent bucking up wind thrown trees, limbing them and chipping the slash. Slash left over from a contract clearing job was also chipped. Bob Ayotte, USFWS Wildland Fire, helped Max Canestorp with these efforts.

Prairie Re-Establishment. Alex Schubert coordinated with Shane Wright (DoD) on the re-establishment of native prairie vegetation at numerous previously disturbed sites at F. E. Warren AFB. Plans are currently ongoing to have new topsoil distributed to the soon-to-be-seeded areas. The hopes are that these new prairie vegetation re-establishments will provide beneficial habitat for native wildlife and pollinators, as well as be esthetically pleasing to base personnel. The exact species to be seeded will be determined in the near future. Species such as milkweeds-- important for monarch butterfly conservation will receive high priority for establishment if site conditions prove appropriate.

Fence Removal. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Buckley Air Force Base (BAFB) Pest Management, and Student Conservation Association removed a .25 mile section of wildlife barrier fencing that surrounded a detention pond on BAFB. Since, the installation of a permanent wildlife barrier around the perimeter fence of the base, the smaller temporary sections within base that protected infrastructure need to be removed. The removal of the fencing allows maintaining the



Bob Ayotte, USFWS Wildland Fire, cuts up one of three big Douglas fir that had fallen across the boundary fence on Cheyenne Mountain AFS.

grounds and controlling invasive species easier in the area.

Wildland Fire Training. Melissa Whittingslow attended the Wildland Fire and Incident Management Academy at the University of Colorado. This academy was a great opportunity for anyone looking to further their knowledge and skills within the wildland fire and/or prescribe fire field. Melissa completed S-200, Initial Attack Incident Commander Type 4.

Habitat Assessment. Chris Kennedy input and analyzed data and started writing report on West Creek habitat project in Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP). The project was to assess habitat within this greenback cutthroat trout population to determine changes following a wildfire and flooding. The most notable habitat changes observed were reduced large woody debris and undercut banks.

ATV Use Proposal. An ATV recreational use program has been proposed for outer lying areas on Schriever AFB. The buffer zones surrounding the built environment on Schriever AFB are relatively pristine shortgrass prairie, and allowing ATV use in the areas would threaten these habitats. A recommendation was made to not allow ATV use in the outer lying areas.

Stream Erosion. Brian met with Colorado Springs Utilities to discuss erosion on lower Kettle Creek which is potentially threatening to undermine gas lines and waterlines. A possible partnership to stabilize the channel, rebuild a floodplain, and restore riparian habitat will protect the utility and also mitigate impacts to Preble's meadow jumping mouse habitat.

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Partnerships & Accountability

Bird Airstrike Hazard (BASH) Activities. A monthly stakeholders meeting was not held during this month. To accommodate BASH efforts within a wildlife management area near the active airfield, Krystal collaborated with Buckley Air Force Base Weapons Safety Manager and other key installation staff, to discuss and gather information to accomplish a Prairie Dog Abatement Risk Management Assessment, for earth moving habitat modification within a known Military Munitions Readiness Program site having land use constraints assigned to the site.

Stream Workshop. Laura Mendenhall attended a Kansas stream workshop led by a 35 year veteran of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The 2 day workshop was highly informative and covered different kinds of stream erosion, how to measure erosion, and how to prevent erosion. The presenter encouraged attendees to think of ditches as first order streams and that in the fight to curb harmful cyanobacteria blooms in our reservoirs, we should start at our first order streams. Foremost among his suggestions for sound management was implementing riparian buffers, a strategy McConnell AFB started in 2016.

AFS Presentation. Chris Kennedy prepared an abstract of a talk entitled “Habitat Changes of a Cutthroat Trout Stream Following Stochastic Events” which will be presented at the 2017 Colorado/Wyoming and Utah American Fisheries Society annual meeting in Grand Junction, CO on January 23rd.

Rio Grande Conservation Team Meeting: Cole Brittain gave a presentation at the Rio Grande Conservation Team Meeting in Alamosa, Colorado. The meeting was scheduled to discuss the recovery efforts involving the Rio Grande Cutthroat, Sucker and Chub. His presentation discussed the Baca National Wildlife Refuge and the U.S.

Fish and Wildlife’s initiative to monitor the behavioral patterns of the Rio Grande Sucker and Chub. The Rio Grande Sucker is a state endangered species and the Rio Grande Chub is a state species of concern. Together with Colorado Parks & Wildlife, the Baca National Wildlife Refuge is attempting to accurately evaluate and eventually modify their current habitat to increase the proliferation of these native species in their historical Basin.



**Rio Grande sucker
found at Baca NWR**

Annual review of all MOUs and MOAs.

As part of the Army and Pueblo Chemical Depot’s annual requirements, Clark Jones reviewed all of the depot’s Memoranda of Understanding, Memoranda of Agreements, Comprehensive Agreements and other various documents relating to formal and informal partnerships established at state and federal levels. Pueblo Chemical Depot is involved in nearly a dozen agreements with the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, various tribal nations, as well as other national and international conservation organizations. These agreements range in scope from the conservation of migratory birds and bats to the preservation of archaeological resources and tribal land access.

Sheep Grazing Project. Alex Schubert coordinated with Brian Meador (University of Wyoming) regarding the budget for the Dalmatian toadflax/sheep grazing project and with Beth Fowers regarding the potential re-seeding portion of the project. The 2017 field season will be the 2nd year for this project and the work plan/

budget that was submitted appears to be appropriate for this year. As part of this year’s activities, some reseed-ing of the treated areas will be implemented. The potential species to seed on the toadflax project were selected off of a few basic criteria: native, suited to the location, and perennials (so they will be more likely to compete with toadflax). The first draft list of potential species to seed includes: Palmer penstemon, broad-beard beardtongue, prairie coneflower, American vetch, dotted gayfeather, black samson, Lewis flax, purple prairie clover, scarlet globemallow, *Coreopsis*, fringed sagebrush, four-wing saltbush, and winterfat.

Air Force Environmental Management – Cross Functional Team Aspect Inventory. The Air Force Environmental Management instruction establishes an Environmental Management System (EMS) as the framework for continual program and process improvement through clearly defined environmental roles and responsibilities, planning requirements, budgeting, effective implementation and operation, and management review. During January, Krystal teamed with Buckley Air Force Base (BAFB) EMS Program Manager to reevaluate past, present, or potential natural resource aspects and impacts (positive or negative) affected by Buckley’s operational processes. She recertified the identified natural resource aspects within each process according to environmental risk scoring metrics established by the Air Force. Krystal’s participation allowed for BAFB to remain up to date and in compliance with the Air Force’s monitoring and measurement of environmental performance outlined in Air Force Instruction 32-7001.

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Leadership in Science & Technology

Pronghorn Management. Alex Schubert was selected to present at the Wildlife Society-Colorado Chapter annual meeting in Fort Collins. Alex's talk will be on pronghorn management at the F. E. Warren AFB. The pronghorn at F. E. Warren Air Force Base present several unique management challenges. These pronghorn provide substantial wildlife viewing opportunities. Limited natural predators exist on Base and a bountiful food supply found on the golf course, lawns, and ornamental landscapes have led to high

pronghorn counts leading to conflicts. Pronghorn management is necessary to maintain the pronghorn social carrying capacity of the Base and to ensure a viable and healthy population today and in the future. With mixed results and varying costs, wildlife professionals on Base have historically attempted numerous management strategies. Approaches undertaken have included limited buck harvest, adult capture and relocation, fawn capture and relocation, as well as sharpshooter-based population reduction. To

better manage the antelope population on Base, future plans include a new "archery only" hunting season planned for 2017.

EIAP Seminar. Dustin Casady completed a seminar titled Proponent Responsibilities in Environmental Impact Analysis Process (EIAP) hosted by the Air Force Institute of Technology Civil Engineering School. The seminar taught the role of the proponent in the EIAP. The importance of developing project alternatives, being part of the EIAP team,

Species Conservation & Management

Pronghorn & Waterfowl Survey. Alex Schubert and Cole Brittain of the USFWS surveyed pronghorn and waterfowl at F. E. Warren AFB this month. For the day surveyed, there were 309 live pronghorn counted, as well as 3 recent pronghorn mortalities. Waterfowl counted at the South Lake Pearson and Lake Centennial on F. E. Warren AFB included 885 Canada geese and 254 ducks.



Pronghorn doe near a building at FE Warren AFB.

Black-Footed Ferret Recovery Implementation Team – Conservation Subcommittee. Clark Jones attended the annual meeting of the conservation subcommittee of the Black-footed Ferret Recovery Implementation Team in Fort Collins, CO in January. This meeting provided updates of recovery

activities for the black-footed ferret over the past year, as well as plans for the implementation of future recovery efforts. This meeting also provided a forum to gage the feasibility of future relocation sites that may require additional agreements with other government entities.

Deer, Elk, & Turkey Surveys. The U.S Air Force Academy Natural Resource Office, including Brian Muhlbachler and Melissa Whittingslow, worked with Colorado Parks and Wildlife to conduct deer, elk, and Turkey surveys on the U.S. Air Force Academy. These surveys are the cookbook for the number of tags that are issued that year and give a good gauge on the impacts of past management and needs for future management in regards to deer, elk, and turkey populations. Student Conservation Association intern, Taylor Cassidy, assisted Dustin Casady with surveying a specific portion of USAFA during the surveys, where they observed deer and several coyote.

Maintaining Portable Antenna Array on Baca National Wildlife Refuge: Cole Brittain is currently compiling data to document winter behavioral patterns of the Rio Grande Chub and the Rio Grande Sucker on the Baca National

Wildlife Refuge. The Baca Refuge contains one of the last two indigenous populations located in the state of Colorado. These species have been tracked using Passive Integrated Transponder Tags in order to record movement of individual fish at different times of the year. The PIT tags are recorded each time these individuals swim near a portable antenna array anchored to substrate within the stream. Cole Brittain and Jason Kline (SWCA) monitor each antennae array monthly in order to analyze and interpret the data. Underground water upwelling and winter refuge is also closely observed by Ron Garcia, Refuge Manager. It is extremely important to document these species location during low water events in order to understand the habitat necessary for their survival.

National Environmental Policy Act. During the month of January, Krystal reviewed and provided biological comments on two (2) Air Force Environmental Impact Analysis Process 813 forms assessing environmental impacts to biological resources for future projects on Buckley Air Force Base (BAFB). The reviews included: Colorado Air National Guard bed down and construction and the Buckley Small Arms Range floor plan.